Aoi Tori no Shinwa

Chapter 01

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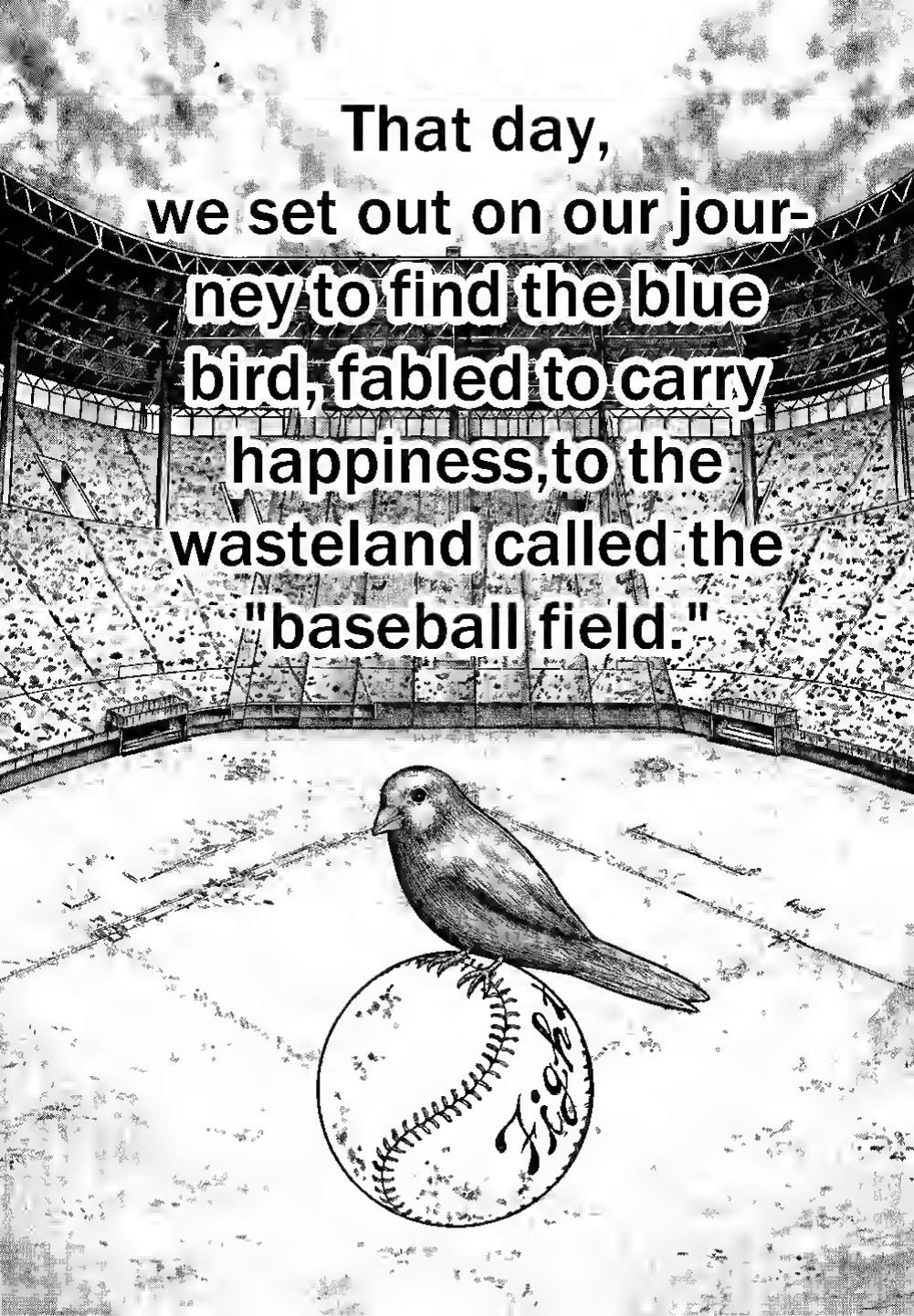
BLUE MYTH

OVERTURE

BLUE MYTH
青い鳥の神話
FLIGHT 1 AOI AND AI

That day,
we set out on our jour-
ney to find the blue
bird, fabled to carry
happiness, to the
wasteland called the
"baseball field."



AGH!!

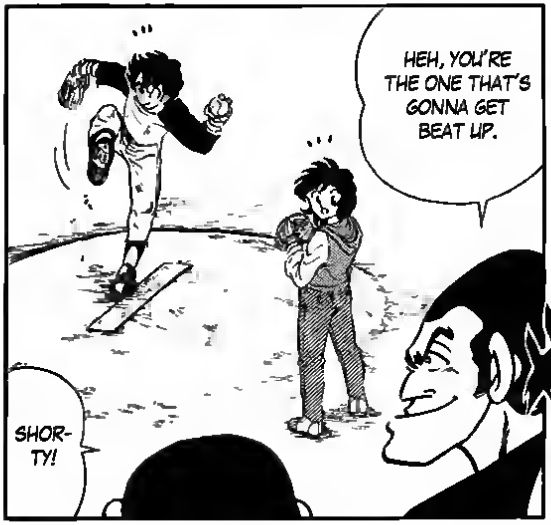
AGH!
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT...
THE BALLS BOUNCE BACK SO HARD, THEY GET LODGED INTO THE GROUND...
WHAT AMAZING THROWING STRENGTH...
HIS PITCHES...
THEY'RE LIKE BULLETS.

I'M AI...
AI DAICHI.
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?

EXCUSE ME,
DO YOU WANT TO PLAY SOME CATCH?
GUH!

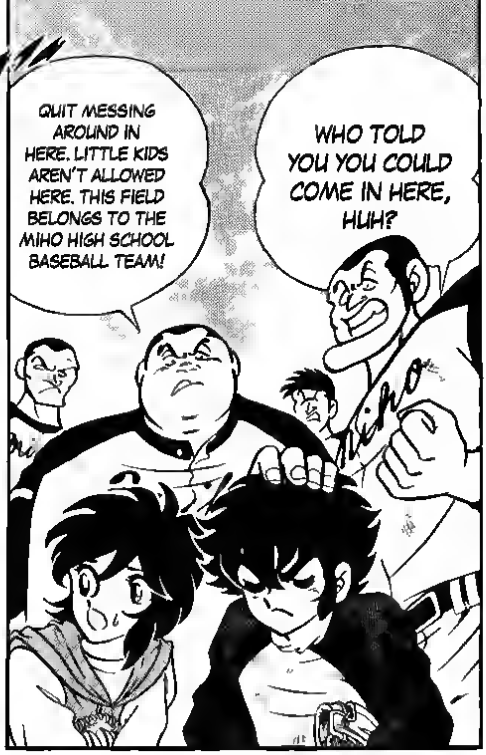
COME ON! WE'RE BOTH THE SAME AGE, AREN'T WE?
AREN'T YOU IN MIDDLE SCHOOL TOO?

YOU'RE GETTING ON MY NERVES!
HMPH! SO WHAT? STARING AT ME WHILE I PRACTICE..

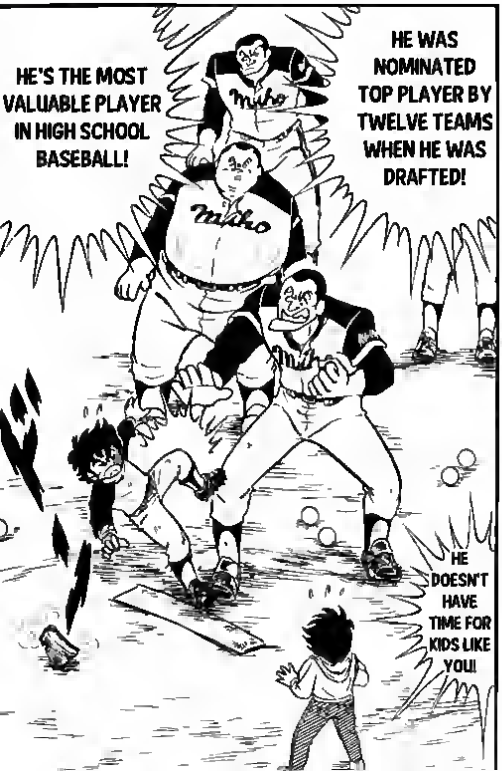

HEH, YOU'RE THE ONE THAT'S GONNA GET BEAT UP.
SHOR-TY!

YOU'RE DISTRACTING ME. GO AWAY BEFORE I BEAT YOU UP!

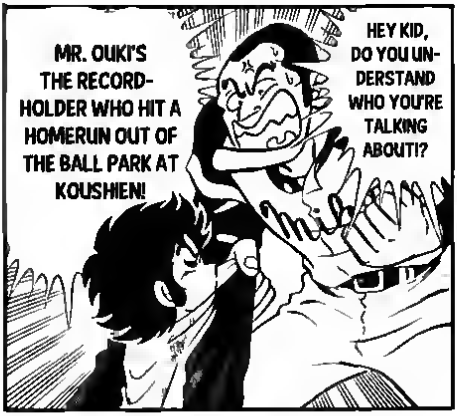
UGH!
HEH, YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE A NUMBER. I'M NOT LISTENING TO SOME SPARE!


QUIT MESSING AROUND IN HERE. LITTLE KIDS AREN'T ALLOWED HERE. THIS FIELD BELONGS TO THE MIHO HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL TEAM!
WHO TOLD YOU YOU COULD COME IN HERE, HUH?

I CAME HERE TO TALK TO HIM!
BRING YOUR CAPTAIN, OUKI, OUT HERE!


HE'S THE MOST VALUABLE PLAYER IN HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL!
HE WAS NOMINATED TOP PLAYER BY TWELVE TEAMS WHEN HE WAS DRAFTED!
HE DOESN'T HAVE TIME FOR KIDS LIKE YOU!

THIS KID, HE'S CLOSE TO MR. OUKI TO CALL HIM LIKE THAT?
D-DID YOU JUST SAY "OUKI"?


MR. OUKI'S THE RECORD-HOLDER WHO HIT A HOMERUN OUT OF THE BALL PARK AT KOUSHIEN!
HEY KID, DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHO YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!?

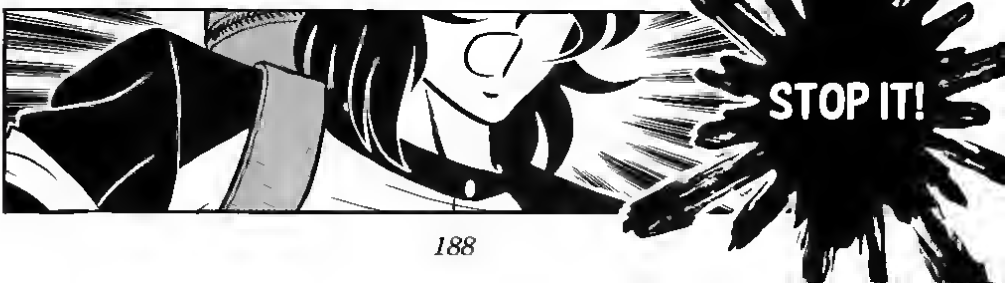
WHY YOU-! SHOW NO MERCY!
JUST GET HIM!

OW!

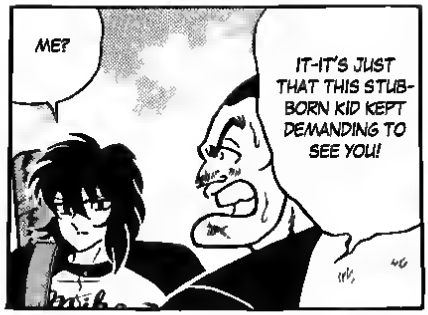
HURRY UP, AND CALL OUKI!
SHUT UP! YOU SPARES WON'T UNDERSTAND!
GAH!

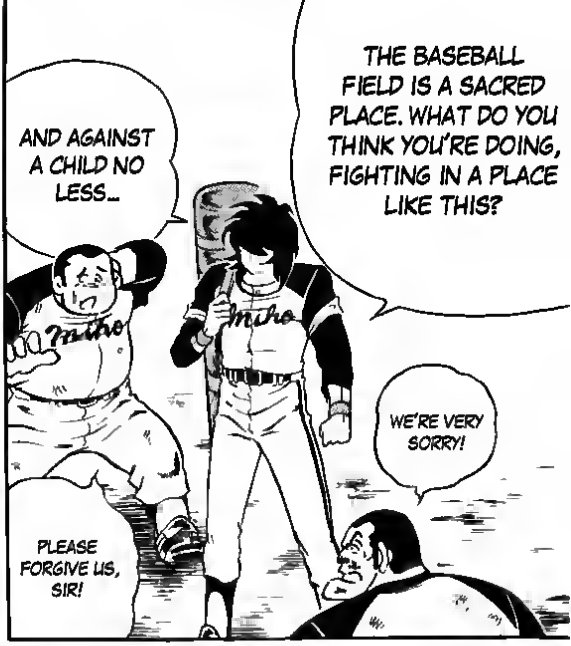
UM....
HEY!..

NOW YOU ARE GONNA GET IT!
YOU...YOU BIT ME!
WE'RE GONNA BEAT YOU TO A PULP!


STOP IT!

GUH!
M-MR. OUKI!
UH?
WHA-?
THAT'S --
-SO
THE PLAYER WHO SET AN ALL-TIME RECORD BY HITTING 24 CONSECUTIVE HOME RUNS OUT OF THE BALL PARK AT KOSHIEN...
THE PRODIGY THAT ONLY APPEARS ONCE IN A HUNDRED YEARS, SHINGO OUKI!


ME?
IT-IT'S JUST THAT THIS STUBBORN KID KEPT DEMANDING TO SEE YOU!


AND AGAINST A CHILD NO LESS...
THE BASEBALL FIELD IS A SACRED PLACE. WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING, FIGHTING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?
WE'RE VERY SORRY!
PLEASE FORGIVE US, SIR!

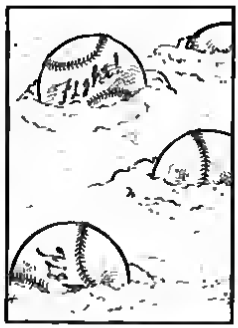
I CHALLENGE YOU, FAIR AND SQUARE!
OUKI! I'M HERE TO AVENGE MY BIG BROTHER!

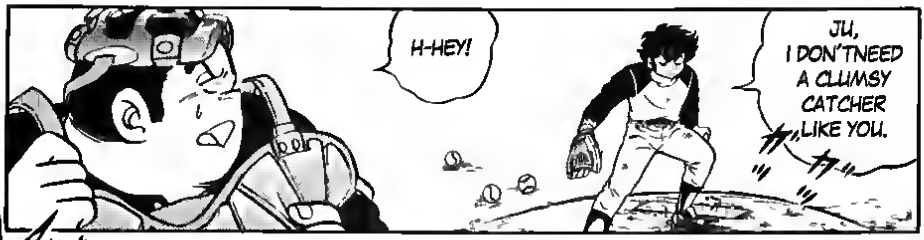
AVENGE?!

REMEMBER THAT PITCHER YOU HIT THAT WINNING HOME RUN AGAINST AT KOSHIEN? HE WAS YU TENDO! I'M HIS YOUNGER BROTHER!
THERE'S NO WAY YOU'D FORGET HIM!
I DON'T REMEMBER DOING ANYTHING WORTH HOLDING A GRUDGE AGAINST, ESPECIALLY TO A STRANGER LIKE YOU.
OH, REALLY?
TENDO?
AOI...
I AM AOI TENDO!
QUIT PLAYING DUMB!
YU TENDO?!
HOW'S YOUR OLDER BROTHER DOING THESE DAYS?
SO YOU'RE THAT TENDO'S YOUNGER BROTHER HUH...
WHAT?
HE'S DEAD.
HE...
HM. OF COURSE, I REMEMBER HIM.
THAT IS SO!

*KOSHIEN: IS THE NAME OF THE JAPANESE HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS , HELD AT KOSHIEN STADIUM.

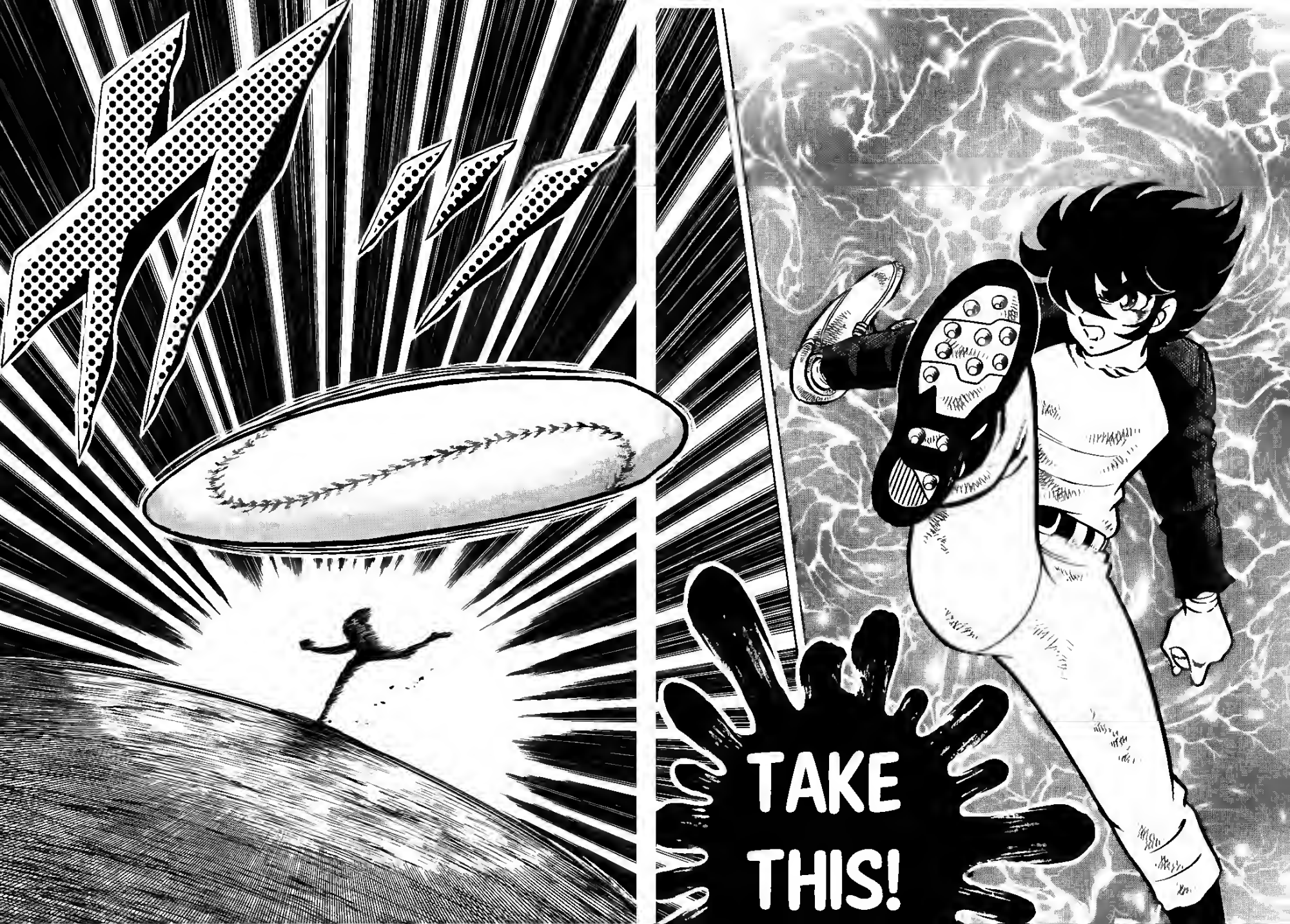
THAT'S WHY I SWEAR TO STRIKE YOU OUT IN HIS PLACE, AND HIS SOUL WILL FINALLY BE AT REST!
HE'S IN HEAVEN NOW...BUT, HE STILL REGRETS THAT DAY MORE THAN ANYTHING!



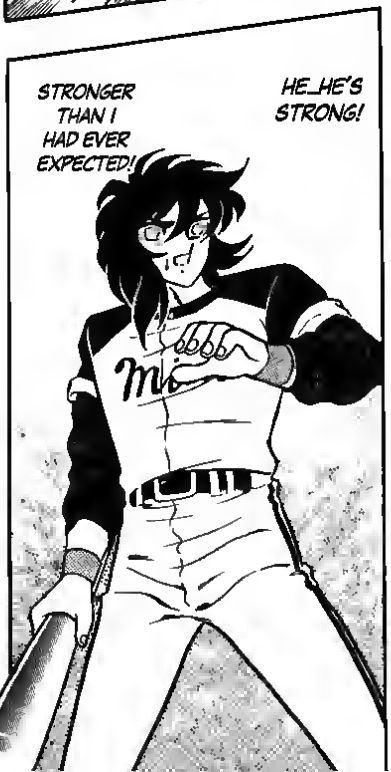


AND BESIDES, NO ONE CAN HANDLE CATCHING MY PITCHES.
WHATEVER. IT'S PROBABLY CAUSE YOU THROW SO BADLY, THE BALL FLIES EVERYWHERE.

BEANBALL: A PITCH INTENTIONALLY THROWN AT THE BATTER'S HEAD


TAKE
THIS!

FIGHTING BALL!!
WAIT-
THAT IS..!
A BLUE BIRD..!
T-THIS ISN'T GOOD. CATCHER! GET OUT OF THE WAY!
HUH?
GAH!!!

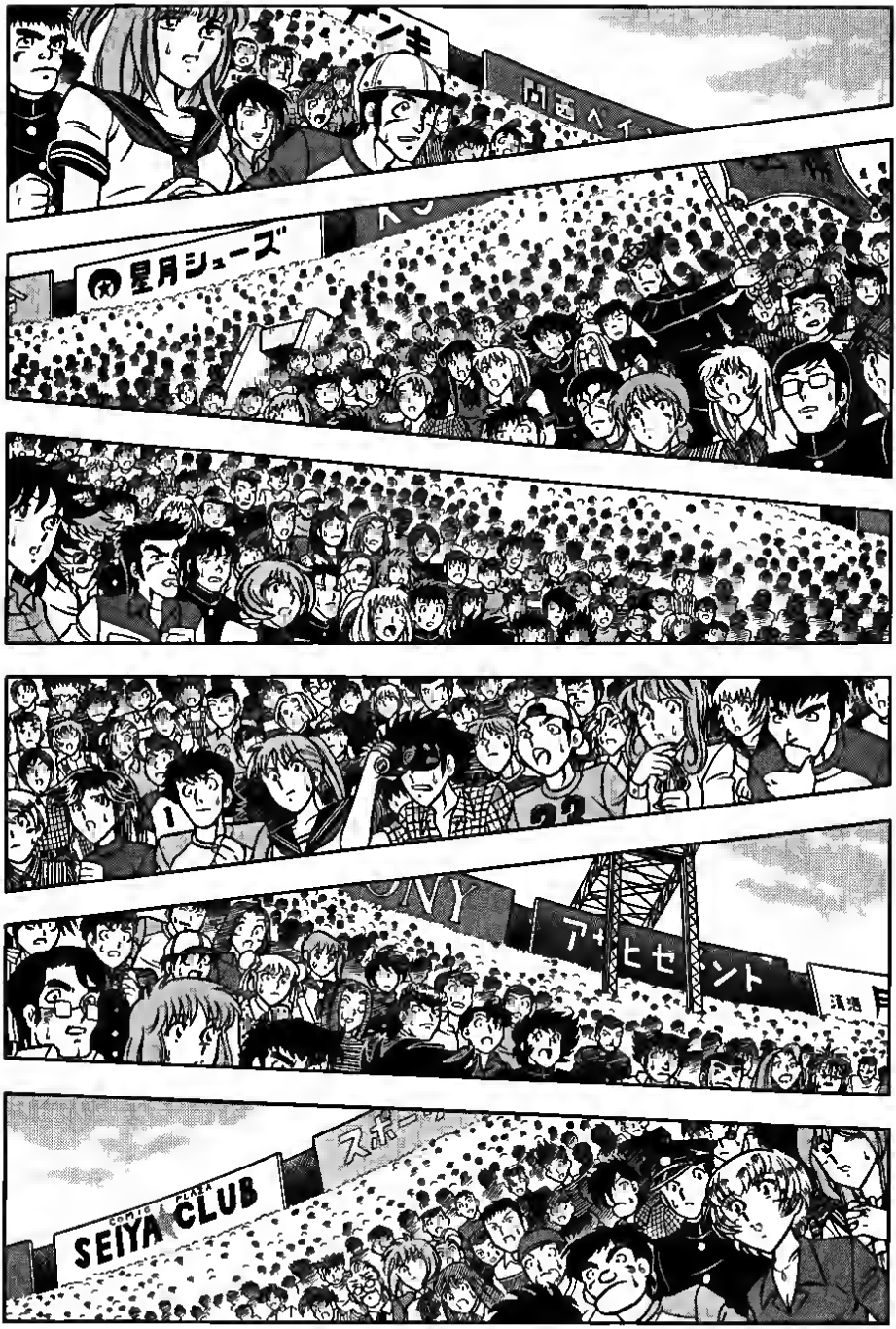

STRONGER THAN I HAD EVER EXPECTED!
HE_HE'S STRONG!

THE ONLY PERSON WHO COULD EVER CATCH MY PITCHES WAS MY OLDER BROTHER.
I TOLD YOU SO.

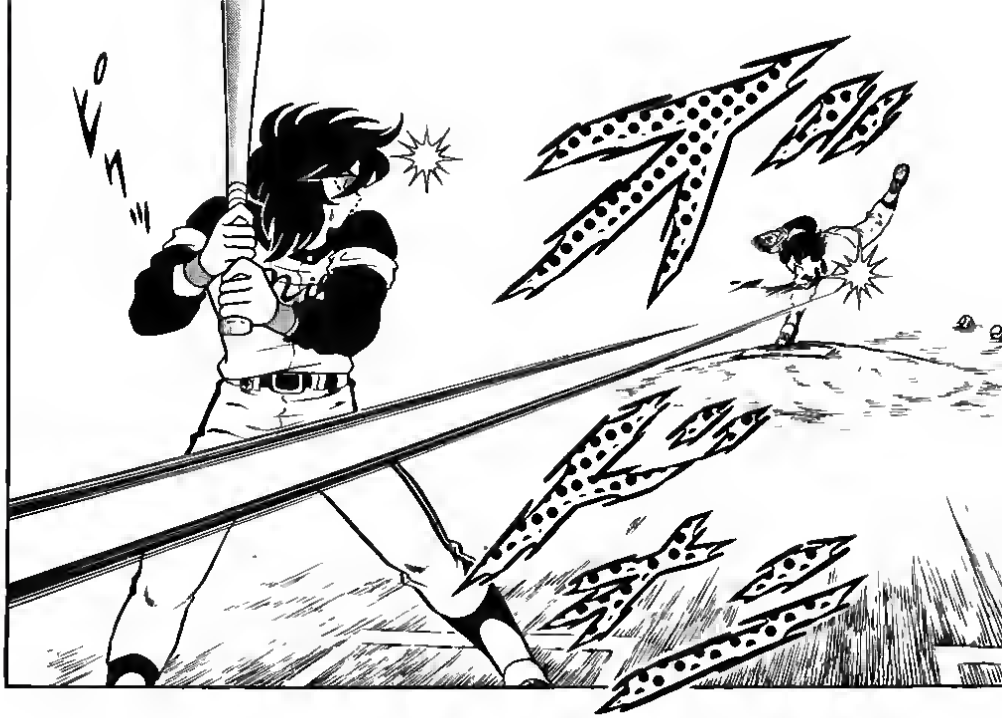
Y-YES SIR!
DON'T JUST STAND THERE! HURRY UP AND GET HIM TO A HOSPITAL!
NO, THIS MIGHT BE EVEN STRONGER...
IT'S THE SAME AS WHEN I HIT THAT OTHER TIME...
TENDO...
HEH-HEH... HERE COME'S PITCH NUMBER TWO!

BOTH TEAMS ARE TIED AT 5 POINTS EACH!
AT LAST, THE FINAL GAME OF THIS YEAR'S KOSHIEN TOURNAMENT IS COMING TO AN END!
甲子園
PITCHER! SWITCH OUT!
WAIT! TOUMEI HIGH IS CHANGING PITCHERS!
BUT, WHO COULD POSSIBLE PITCH AGAINST OUKI, WHOSE HIT EVERY BALL CLEAR OUT OF THE STADIUM?!
WITH TWO OUTS, THE NEXT BATTER UP IS OUKI, THE BATTING PRODIGY!
NOW, WILL OUKI END THE GAME HERE WITH A WINNING HOMERUN AND ADD ONE MORE TO HIS RECORD STREAK OF HOMERUNS?!

THE SUB THEY'VE SENT IN IS YU TENDO!
WHAT COULD THEY POSSIBLY BE THINKING? SENDING OUT AN UNKNOWN PITCHER WHO HASN'T PITCHED A SINGLE GAME IN A CRUNCH LIKE THIS?
HAS TOUMEI HIGH GIVEN UP THE GAME?!
HE'S REGISTERED ON THEIR TEAM ROSTER, BUT THIS WILL BE HIS FIRST TIME EVER PITCHING DURING KOSHIEN, INCLUDING THE PRELIMINARIES.
TENDO? I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER HEARD OF HIM.


星月シューズ
SEIYA CLUB

UGH!
WHERE THEY HIDING THIS PITCHER ALL ALONG?....I CAN'T HIT THIS!
...THOSE WERE MY THOUGHTS EXACTLY AT THAT MOMENT FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART.



IT'S 2-0 NOW. ONE MORE, AND IT'S THREE STRIKES YOU'RE OUT!
JU JU, WHAT'S THE MATTER? CAN'T MOVE A MUSCLE?

N-NO WAY!
HALF OF THE BALL WAS OUT OF MY STRIKE ZONE.

B-BUT -
AND I NEVER LIE.
MY SIGHT IS PERFECT.

SORRY TO DISAPPOINT YOU, BUT THAT LAST PITCH WAS A 'BALL', NOT A STRIKE
WHAT!?

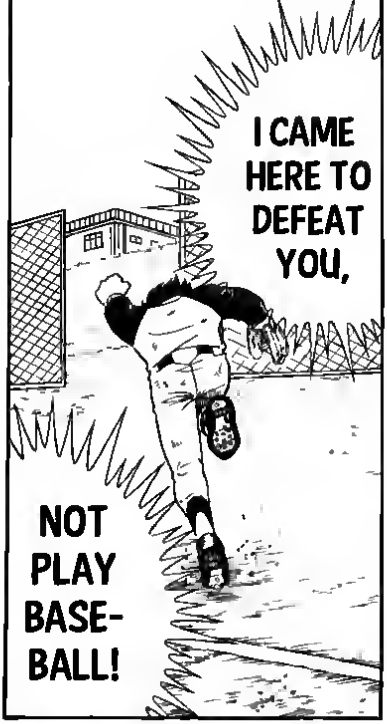
FINE! THEN HOW ABOUT THIS ONE!
IT WAS ALMOST TWO BALLS' WIDTH OVER THE LINE.
EVEN YOU KNOW THAT THAT ONE WAS COMPLETELY OUT OF MY STRIKE ZONE.
UGH...
D-DAMN IT!!

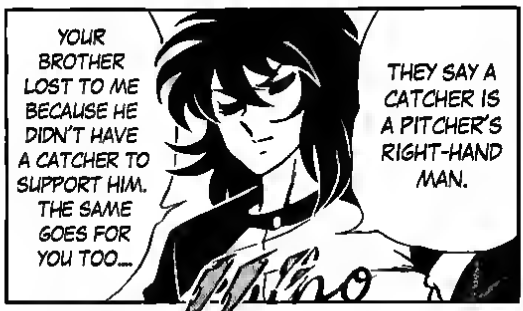
IT LOOKS TO ME LIKE YOU SHARE THE SAME WEAKNESS AS YOUR BROTHER.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
THAT'S YOUR THIRD BALL!
UH?
GOOD NAME FOR IT. YOU PITCH WITH OUTRIGHT AGGRESSION. JUST LIKE YOU SAID, THERE'S NO CATCHER IN THE COUNTRY WHO COULD CATCH YOUR PITCHES.
YOUR TERRIFLYINGLY STRONG PITCHES INJURE ANYONE WHO TRIES TO CATCH THEM. YOU CALLED IT A "FIGHTING BALL", IF I RECALL.
A PITCHER WITHOUT A CATCHER TO LEAD HIM IS LIKE A ONE-WINGED BIRD TRYING TO FLY.
A PITCHER AND CATCHER ARE TWO HALF OF A WHOLE! THEY SUPPORT EACH OTHER TO BECOME STRONGER.
SO WHAT? ...

AHH!!
I'M HERE TO STRIKE YOU OUT!
S-SHUT UP!! I'M NOT HERE TO PLAY BASEBALL!
FOUR BALLS, AND YOU'RE OUT.
JUST TO WARN YOU, IF THIS NEXT PITCH IS A BALL, YOU LOSE.
HOW'S THAT FOR DEAD CENTER?
LET'S SEE YOU TRY TO HIT THAT!
TAKE THIS!

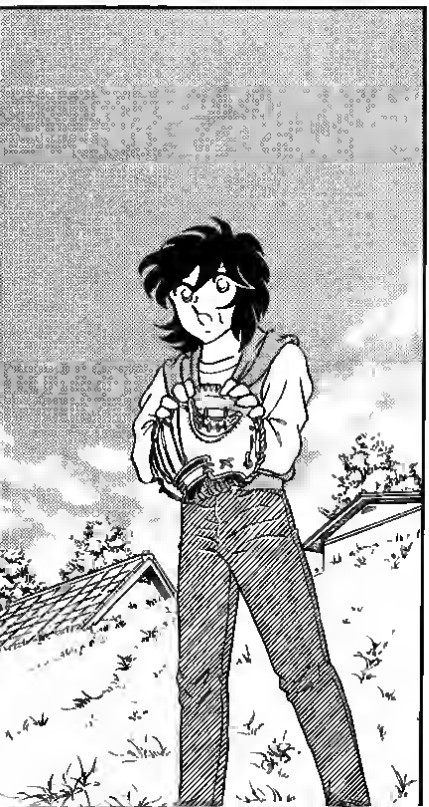
HUM?!

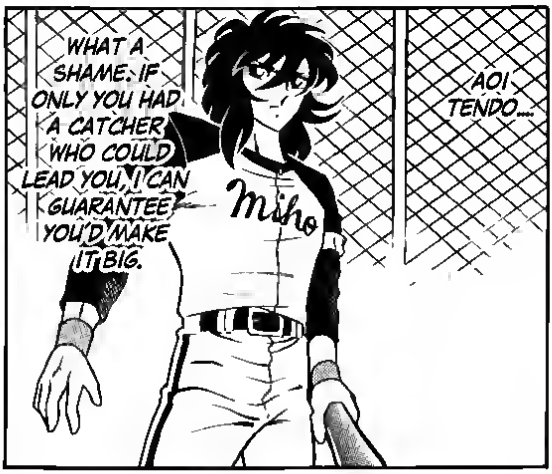
WHOA!
TH-THAT'S HIS RUMORED SKY STANCE!
IT-IT JUST DISAPPEARED INTO THE SKY!
BUT AFTER HIS SECOND PITCH, HIS PITCHING STRENGTH DROPPED SHARPLY... PERHAPS HE WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE CATCHER WHO CAME IN TO REPLACE THE FIRST ONE...
IT WAS LIKE THIS WHEN I BATTED AGAINST YOUR OLDER BROTHER AS WELL. WHEN I SAW HIS FIRST PITCH, I KNEW FOR A FACT THAT I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO HIT IT.


I CAME HERE TO DEFEAT YOU,
NOT PLAY BASE-BALL!

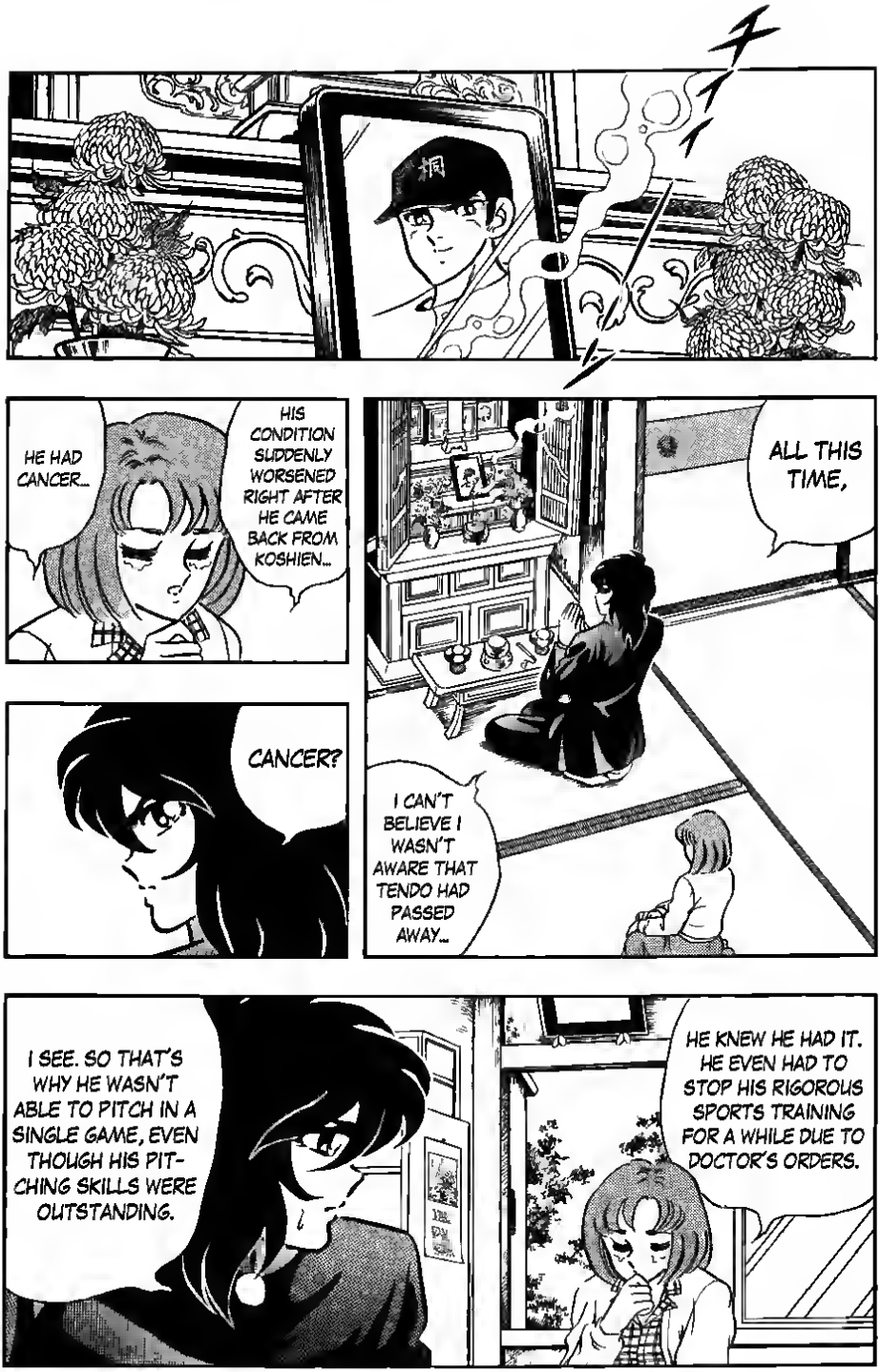

YOUR BROTHER LOST TO ME BECAUSE HE DIDN'T HAVE A CATCHER TO SUPPORT HIM. THE SAME GOES FOR YOU TOO...
THEY SAY A CATCHER IS A PITCHER'S RIGHT-HAND MAN.

YOU THINK YOU KNOW EVERYTHING, DON'T YOU!
SHUT UP!!




WHAT A SHAME. IF ONLY YOU HAD A CATCHER WHO COULD LEAD YOU, I CAN GUARANTEE YOU'D MAKE IT BIG.
AOI TENDO....

NO ONE WOULD RISK THEIR LIFE TO JUST TO BE HIS CATCHER.
BUT, THAT'S IMPOSSI-BLE.


チーン
桐
ALL THIS TIME,
I CAN'T BELIEVE I WASN'T AWARE THAT TENDO HAD PASSED AWAY...
CANCER?
HE HAD CANCER...
HIS CONDITION SUDDENLY WORSENED RIGHT AFTER HE CAME BACK FROM KOSHIEN...
I SEE. SO THAT'S WHY HE WASN'T ABLE TO PITCH IN A SINGLE GAME, EVEN THOUGH HIS PITCHING SKILLS WERE OUTSTANDING.
HE KNEW HE HAD IT. HE EVEN HAD TO STOP HIS RIGOROUS SPORTS TRAINING FOR A WHILE DUE TO DOCTOR'S ORDERS.

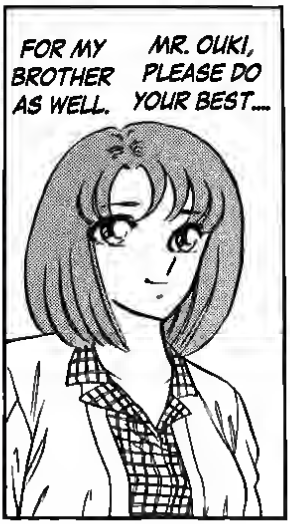
UP UNTIL THE VERY END, HE WAS VERY PROUD TO HAVE PITCHED HIS FIRST AND LAST GAME AGAINST YOU.
YES, BUT DESPITE THAT, MY OLDER BROTHER WAS VERY HAPPY PLAYING BASEBALL.
HE PUT EVERYTHING HE HAD INTO HIS VERY FIRST PITCH...
EVERYTHING HE HAD GAINED DURING THE SHORT 17 YEARS OF HIS LIFE
I BELIEVE HE PUT EVERYTHING HE HAD INTO THAT FIRST PITCH,
HELL, I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO EVEN BUNT IT. TENDO, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU MAY HAVE BEEN THE TRUE WINNER AFTER ALL....
...I SEE.... IF YOU HAD BEEN ABLE TO PITCH TWO MORE LIKE YOUR FIRST ONE, I KNOW I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO HIT THAT HOMERUN.
...SOB...

I'M LEAVING FOR TOKYO TOMORROW.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO VISIT US.
MISS YURIE...

SO,
THE RUMORS ARE TRUE?

YES, I'M JOINING THE YOMIURI GIANTS.


MR. OUKI, PLEASE DO YOUR BEST....
FOR MY BROTHER AS WELL.

WELL, THEN. GOODBYE...
AH...

OUCH! IT WASN'T A GRUDGE MATCH, I CHALLENGED HIM TO A DUEL!
DON'T GIVE ME THAT! I HEARD YOU CHALLENGED MR OUKI IN A GRUDGE MATCH YESTERDAY?
GAH! YURIE, WHADDYA THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
HEY! HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, AOI!
JUST BECAUSE HE'S A LITTLE HANDSOME, AND BOOM! YOU'RE ON HIS SIDE IN A FLASH, ALL LOVEY-DOVEY
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
OUR BIG BROTHER WAS HAPPY FROM THE BOTTOM OF HIS HEART TO HAVE FOUGHT AGAINST MR. OUKI! IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT WINNING OR LOSING!
EITHER WAY, YOU'VE COMPLETELY MISUNDERSTOOD HIM. HE'S NOT OUR BROTHER'S "SWORN ENEMY"!
SH-SHUT UP! THIS IS WHY WOMEN CAN'T BE TRUSTED!
PWEASE DO YOUR BEST~!
OH, MR. OUKI~
UGLY!
HEHE!
YOU-YOU JERK! WHEN DID I EVER GET LOVEY-DOVEY WITH MR. OUKI?
CATCH ME IF YOU CAN!
I'LL PUNCH YOU, YOU LITTLE BRAT!

KRAK
THERE'S NO POINT IN PITCHING AGAINST A WALL!
I QUIT!
HEH!
YOUR BROTHER LOST TO ME BECAUSE HE DIDN'T HAVE A CATCHER TO SUPPORT HIM. THE SAME GOES FOR YOU TOO...
THEY SAY A CATCHER IS A PITCHER'S RIGHT-HAND MAN.
THE ONLY PERSON THAT COULD CATCH MY PITCHES WAS YOU!
BROTHER... WHY DID YOU HAVE TO DIE?

Fight!
LET ME TRY CATCHING FOR YOU.
YOU AGAIN?
HAVE YOU EVEN PLAYED BASEBALL BEFORE?
NOPE, NOT EVEN ONCE.
YOU SAW HOW STRONG MY PITCHES WERE YESTERDAY!
QUIT BEING STUPID! IF A WIMPY-LOOKING KID LIKE YOU TRIED CATCHING, YOU WOULDN'T GET HURT, YOU'D DIE!
OF COURSE
BUT, I'VE READ A BUNCH OF BOOKS ON BASEBALL! LIKE RULEBOOKS, AND BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS BASEBALL STARS, AND STUFF I'VE READ MORE THAN YOU CAN COUNT!
WHAT?
WH-WHAT?
I WAS WATCHING THE WHOLE TIME.

JUST LIKE YOU SAID, I'VE NEVER BEEN VERY STRONG, SO I MOSTLY STAYED INDOORS AND JUST READ BOOKS SINCE I WAS YOUNG.
MY PARENTS WERE ALWAYS TELL ME, YOU MUSN'T EXERCISE TOO HARD! YOU'LL OVEREXERT YOURSELF!
...BUT, I NEVER FELT TRULY ALIVE LIVING LIKE THAT.

WHEN I WAS LITTLE,
I READ A FAIRY-TALE ONCE ABOUT A BLUE BIRD THAT BROUGHT HAPPINESS...
THE Blue Bird

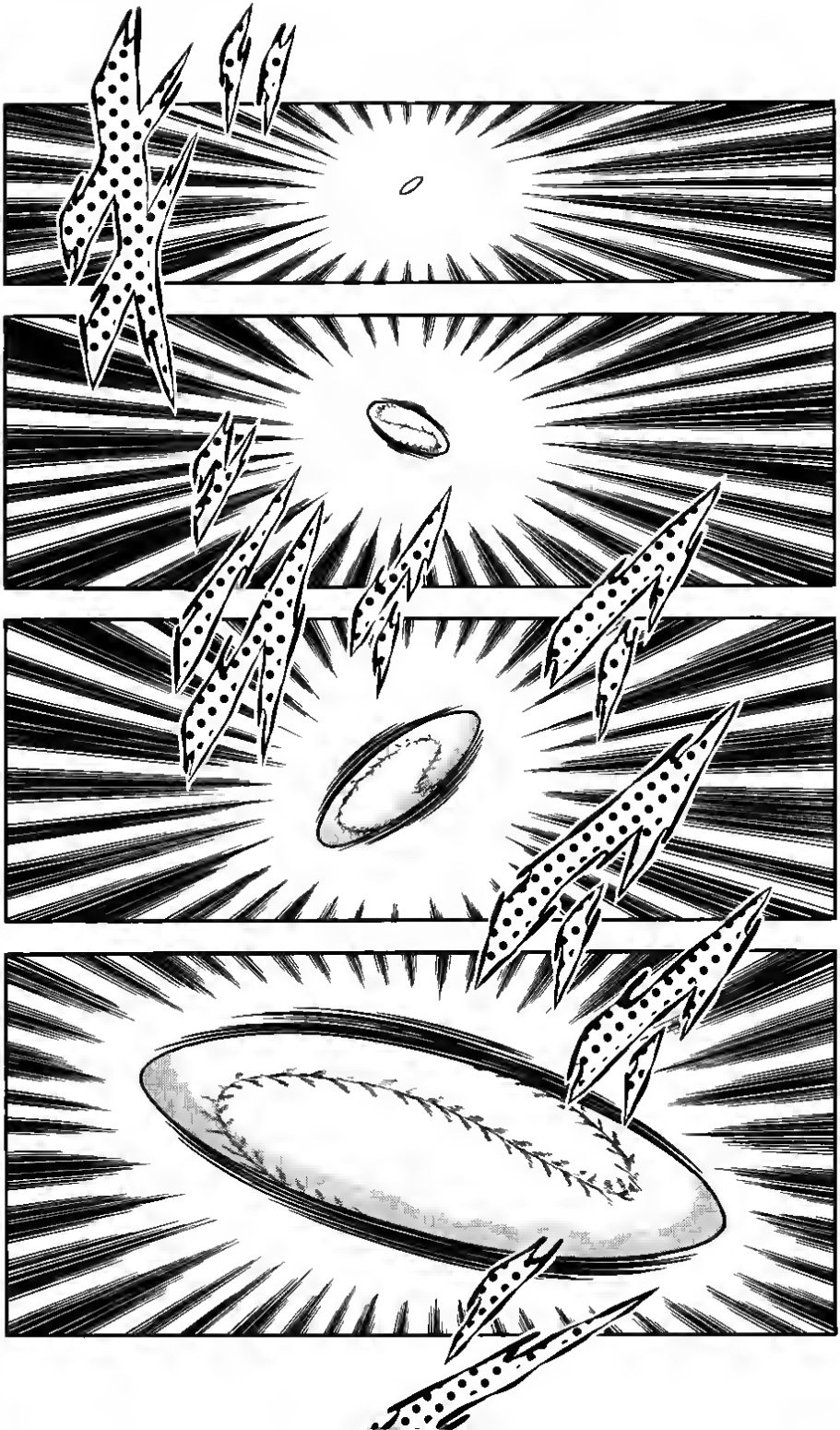
BUT WHEN I SAW YOU PITCHING YESTERDAY, I SAW A BLUE BIRD IN THE BALL YOU THREW.

A BLUE...-BIRD...?

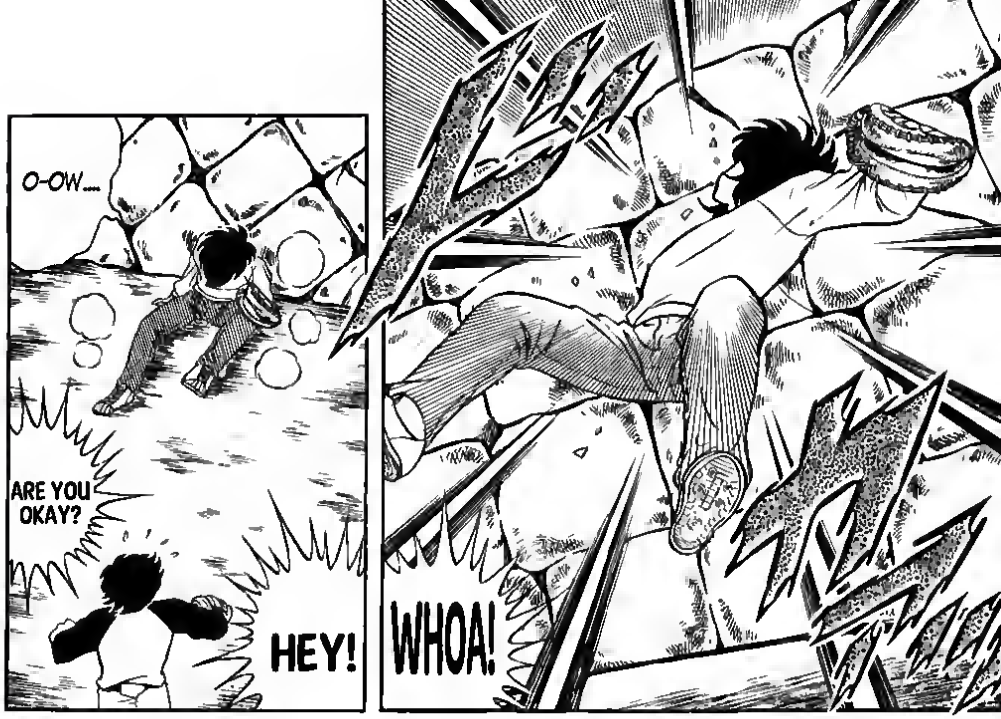
LET ME TRY AND CATCH FOR YOU, JUST THIS ONCE!
PLEASE, I'M BEG-GING YOU.

I WOULD HAVE FELT THE JOY OF BEING ALIVE FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE I WAS BORN!
EVEN IF IT KILLS ME, I'LL HAVE NO REGRETS!
FINE! I'LL PITCH ONE FOR YOU.
BUT, DON'T EXPECT ME TO GO EASY ON YOU. I'M THROWING AT FULL STRENGTH!
I'VE NEVER MET A CATCHER LIKE HIM....
WHAT'S UP WITH THIS GUY? ONCE HE PUT ON THE MITT, IT'S LIKE HE TURNED INTO A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSON!
WHAT IF... HE ACTUALLY...

IF YOU'RE SERIOUS ABOUT THIS, THEN GIVE IT EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT TO CATCH IT!
OKAY.
HERE IT COMES!!



I..I'LL BE THE ONE TO CATCH IT!
THE BLUE BIRD THAT BRINGS HAPPI-NESS!
THE BLUE BIRD!
THERE IT IS AGAIN!
I'LL CATCH IT IN MY OWN TWO HANDS!

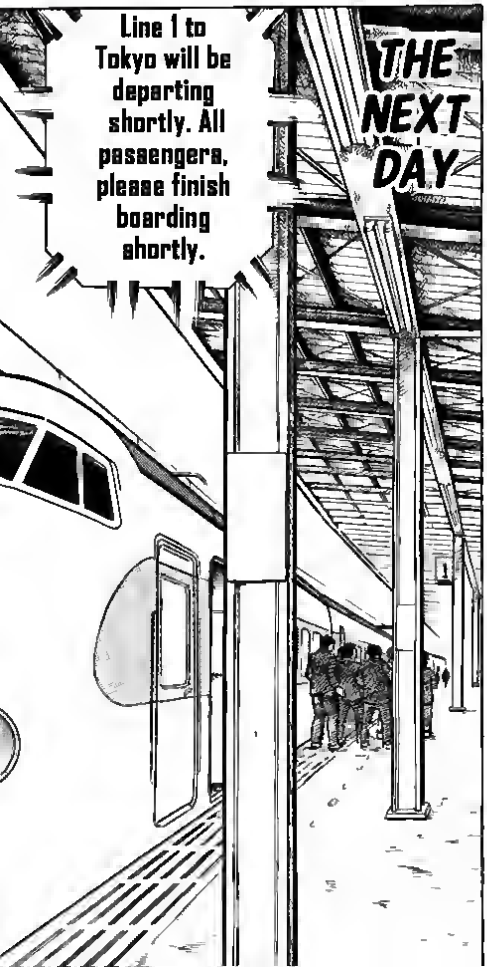

O-OW...
ARE YOU OKAY?
HEY!
WHOA!

THE BALL'S RIGHT IN MY MITT.
HAAA
HAAA
HAAA
H... HEY LOOK....

...YOUR BALL.
I CAUGHT...

YOU ACTUA-LLY...
YOU...

THE ONLY PERSON IN THE WORLD WHO CAN...
I... I FOUND HIM... SOMEONE WHO CAN CATCH FOR ME...


THE NEXT DAY
Line 1 to Tokyo will be departing shortly. All passengers, please finish boarding shortly.

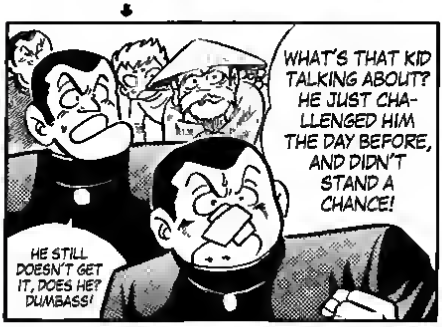
I NEED TO ASK YOU A FAVOR THIS TIME.
UM.. COULD YOU CATCH FOR ME AGAIN TOMO-RROW?

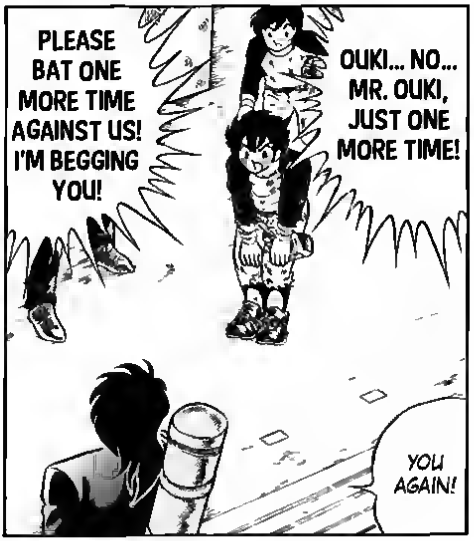
PLEASE!

THERE HE IS!
HM
HM
OUKI!!

2
WELL, THEN, I'LL BE OFF.
MR. OUKI, WE'LL BE WISHING YOU THE BEST!
THAT'S SO AWESOME YOU'LL ALREADY HAVE A STARTING POSITION!
PLEASE BE CAREFUL FOR YOUR HEALTH!

WAIT!!


WHAT'S THAT KID TALKING ABOUT? HE JUST CHALLENGED HIM THE DAY BEFORE, AND DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE!
HE STILL DOESN'T GET IT, DOES HE? DUMBASS!


PLEASE BAT ONE MORE TIME AGAINST US! I'M BEGGING YOU!
OUKI... NO... MR. OUKI, JUST ONE MORE TIME!
YOU AGAIN!

I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO CHALLENGE YOU AGAIN ONCE YOU GO PRO, SO PLEASE, JUST ONE MORE TIME!
THIS WILL BE THE LAST TIME!

M-MR. OUKI!
HM. IT SEEMS LIKE YOU TWO PRACTICED QUITE A BIT YESTERDAY.
I'LL BE AOI'S CATCHER TODAY, SO PLEASE, IF YOU COULD AGREE...
I'M ASKING AS WELL.
INTERES-TING
Y-YES SIR!
I'M ONLY GIVING YOU ONE PITCH. YOU STRIKE ME OUT, YOU WIN. YOU MISS MY STRIKE ZONE AND THROW A BALL, YOU LOSE. IS THAT CLEAR?
RIGHT!
AI! LET'S GO!
Fight!

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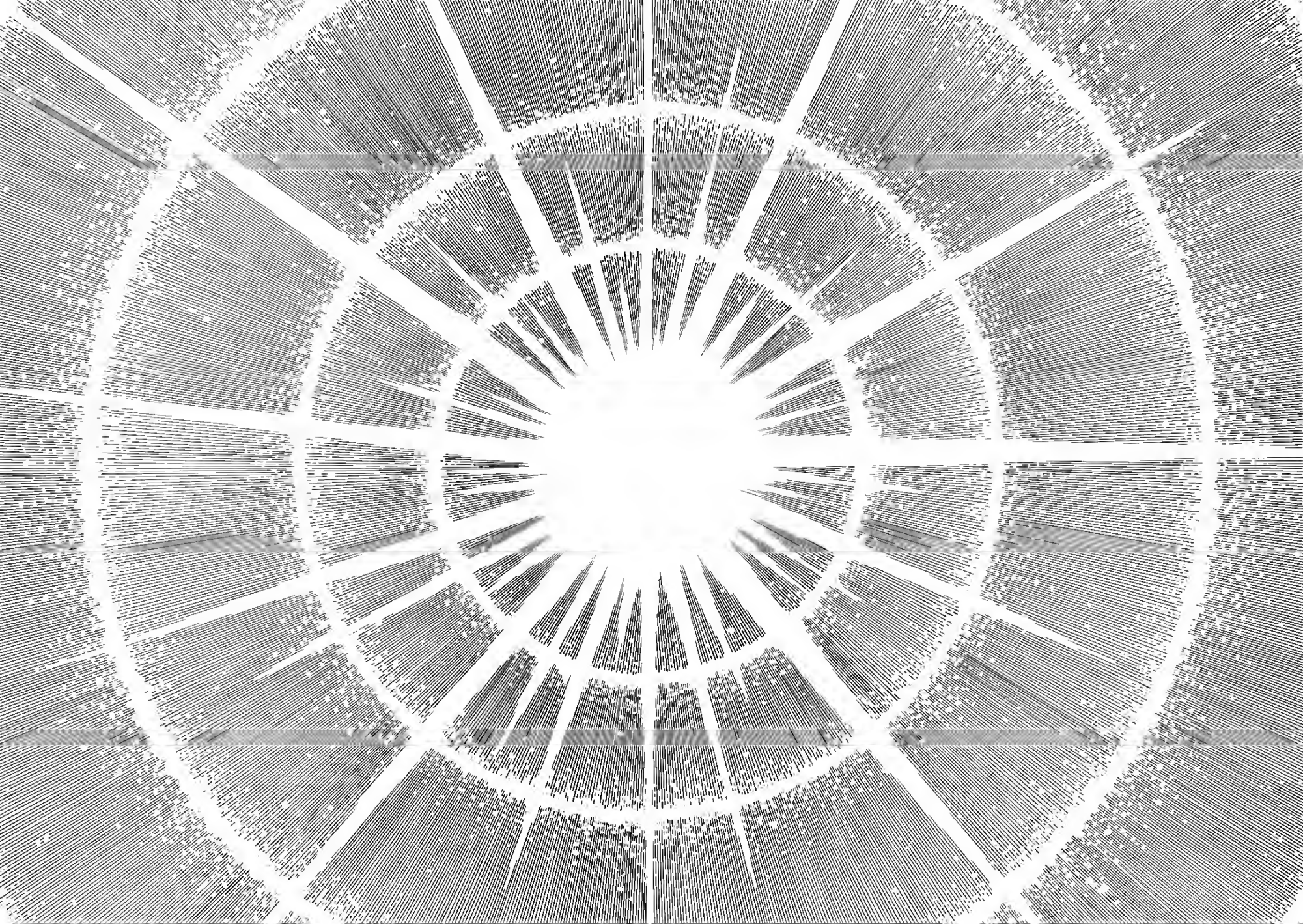
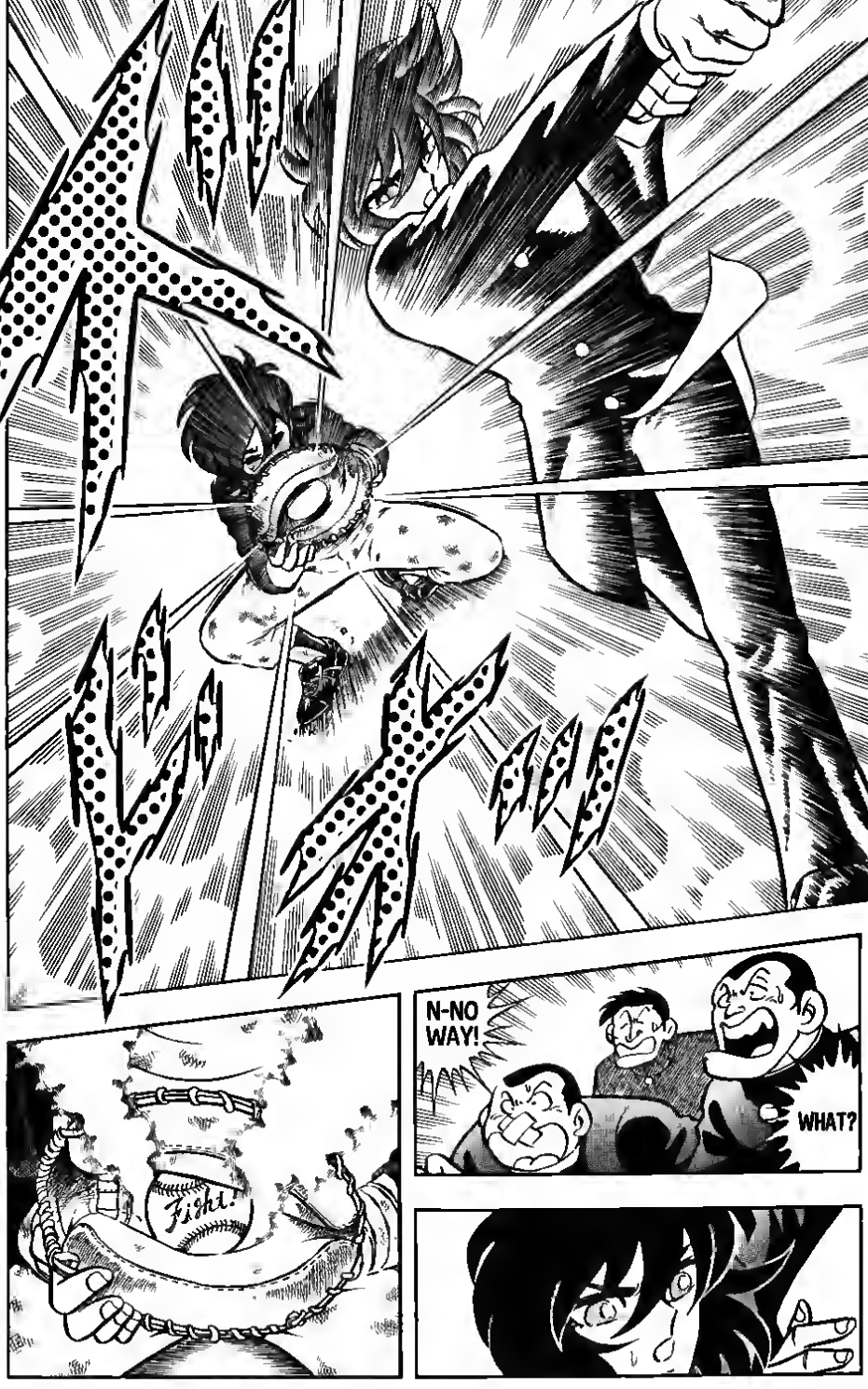
FLY!!

OUR
BLUE
BIRD!

HE THREW A STRAIGHTBALL, DEAD-CENTER!
HERE IT COMES!




Fishi.
N-NO WAY!
WHAT?

AOI!
WE DID IT, AI!
WE... WE DID IT.
AI!
AI! THANK YOU!
IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU,
HE'S BEEN PROMISED A STARTING POSITION WITH THE GIANTS! HOW COULD HE HAVE BEEN STRUCK OUT BY A MIDDLE SCHOOLER?
THAT'S... THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. MR. OUKI...

AND THE CATCHER IS PREPARED TO RISK IT ALL TO RECEIVE IT.
THE PITCHER THROWS, PUTTING EVERYTHING ON THE LINE.
IT'S MY LOSS.
MR. OUKI!
¡AH!
YOU TWO AREN'T JUST A BATTERY, YOUR SOULS ARE BONDED AS WELL.
BETWEEN YOU TWO, NO ONE WILL BE ABLE TO HIT ANY BALL YOU THROW.
WE SWEAR WE'LL SOME DAY FIND IT!
ゴトン
ゴトン
MR. OUKI! PLEASE KEEP WATCHING US!

OUR
OWN
BLUE
BIRD!